RAJYA SABHA

Monday, 12th May 1997/22 Vaisakha 1919 (Saka)

The House met at the eleven of the clock.

Mr. Chairman *in the Chair*

OBITUARY REFERENCE

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member, I refer with profound sorrow to the passing away of Shri B.C. Bhagwati, a former Member of this House, on the 8th May, 1997 at the age of 90.

Born at Sootea in District Darrang of Assam in March, 1907 Shri Bhagwati was educated at Cotton college, Guwahati. A journalist by profession, Shri Bhagwati actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921 and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, 1932 and 1942 and suffered imprisonment for several terms. A social worker and a labour leader, Shri Bhagwati was associated with several institutions engaged in the welfare of weaker sections of the society. He was a member of the Assam Chai Karamchari Sangh and the INTUC, Assam Unit. Later, he become the President of the INTUC in 1971. He was also the Chairman of the Inland Water Transport Committee of the Ministry of Shipping and Transport from 1968 to October, 1970 and the Expert Committee on Unemployment.

Shri Bhagwati started his legislative career as a member of the Assam legislative Assembly from 1947 to 1957. Thereafter, he was a Member of the Second, Third and Fourth Lok Sabhas. Shri Bhagwati served as the Chairman of the House Committee of the Lok Sabha from 1967 to 1970. Shri Bhagwati represented the State of Assam in this House from April, 1972 to April 1978. He was also a Deputy Minister in the Union Council of Ministers holding the Portfolios of Transport and Communication, Works Housing and Urban Development from May, 1962 to March, 1967.

Shri Bhagwati was conferred the Padma Bhushan for his manifold services to the nation.

In the passing away of Shri B.C. Bhagwati, the country has lost a veteran freedom fighter and a distinguished parliamentarian.

We deeply mourn the passing away of Shri B.C. Bhagwati.

I request members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.

(Hon. Members then stood in silence for one minute.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Secretary-General will convey to the member of the bereaved family our deep sense of sorrow and sympathy.

RE. LARGE-SCALE LOSS OF LIFE AND DESTRUCTION IN THE EARTHQUAKE IN IRAN

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, it is with utmost grief and sorrow that I refer to the earthquake, on the 10th May, 1997, in the eastern part of Iran. In the scale of loss of human life, numbers injured and devastation of the wherewithal of life, it is a catastrophe of awesome dimensions. Our heart goes out to those who have lost their kith and kin and we pray for the early recovery of those who have been injured.

On behalf of the whole House, I convey to the Iranian Government and the friendly people of Iran the deepest sympathy of this House for the loss of life and property in this great tragedy.

I request Members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of those who lost their lives in the earthquake disaster.

(Hon. Members then stood in silence for one minute.)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Annual Growth Rate in Agricultural Sector

*501. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:†

SHRI MD. SALIM:

Will the Minister of PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state; how Government would attain

† The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Nilotpal Basu.

4.5 per cent annual growth rate in agriculture sector as per the target of Ninth Five year Plan when the decade-wise performance showed an annual growth of 2.82 per cent in 1950-51 to 1960-61, 2.01 per cent in 1960-61 to 1970-71; 1.81 per cent in 1970-71 to 1980-81; 3.13 per cent in 1980-81 to 1990-91 and lastly 3.27 per cent in the next five years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The Ninth Plan accords highest priority to agriculture and rural development with a view to generating adequate productive employment and eradication of poverty and ensuring food and nutritional security for all, particularly the vulnerable section of the society. Food security includes peoples access to basic nutritional requirements both physically and economically. To meet the requirements of food security, diversifying domestic food demands and agricultural exports, since the entire expansion of output has to be derived from productivity expansion, cropping intensity will have to rise in a manner not seen before. Land and Water management practices will have to be internalised, Growth which is sustainable will form part of the agricultural development strategies.

In the accelerated growth scenario for the Ninth Plan, efforts will need to be made to achieve an agricultural growth rate of 4.5% per annum. This growth rate is in gross value of output and not agricultural GDP or value added. The growth rate has been arrived after consideration of demand requirements, both domestic as well as external and the production feasibility. Preliminary exercises shows that with a growth rate of 7% annual, foodgrain demand will rise around 3% annual, non-foodgrain crops at around 5 to 6% annual and animal husbandry, fish and forestry at higher rates. Export demand will be extra. The target will be realised in the Ninth Plan through the regionally differentiated strategy based on agronomic, climatic and environment-friendly conditions. At the macro level, the agricultural development strategy will be differentiated by broad regional characteristics of agro-economic situation as follows:

(a) North-Western High Productivity Region—To promote diversification and high value crops.

(b) Eastern Region with abundant water—To exploite the productivity potential of region to bring the yield to the level of high productivity States of Haryana and Punjab. The major thrust will be on flood control, drainage management, improvement of irrigation facilities, input delivery system supported by adequate agricultural credit and extension services.

(c) Water scares region—Peninsular India including Rajasthan—The emphasis will be on development of efficient water harvesting and conservation methods and the technologies, suitable irrigation package based on watershed approach and promoting the appropriate farming system.

(d) Ecologically fragile region including Himalaya desert areas — The thrust will be on the development of eco-friendly agriculture in this region.

A special agricultural development strategy utilising a special package for Eastern region to accelerate agricultural growth is being drawn up, in order to provide timely and adequate availability of inputs to the farmers, and augmentation of infrastructure through Rural Infrastructure, Development Funds (RIDF). Emphasis will be given to promote a higher seed replacement rate and greater credit flow will be ensured to meet the investment requirements of the farming community. Crop Insurance Scheme, to provide security for marginal and small farmers in rainfed areas will also receive greater attention. Finally research efforts will be accelerated through Bio-technology, micro-biology, genetic improvement to crop, improvement of genetic stock and post-harvest technology, etc. There will be greater emphasis on human resource development through upgrading teaching facilities. The extension infrastructure for transfer of technology will be made more effective and responsive to meet farmers needs.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Mr. Chairman, Sir, now the Minister has laid on the Table a

considerably lengthy statement in reply to the question, but I am afraid that one is reminded of the phrase 'if wishes were horses'. Now so far as meeting the target of 4.5 per cent growth in agricultural production is concerned, the statement fails singularly in pointing out from where the confidence of the Government flows because, Mr. Chairman, Sir, as has been pointed out in the question itself, that nothing in past records, so far as agricultural production in the country is concerned, gives us this kind of optimism that a 4.5 per cent growth rate can be really achieved because if we see the other indicators like value-added in the agriculture and allied sectors, it is only once during the entire period of 1950-51—1994-95 that there has been a growth rate of 2.42 per cent per annum, and in this entire period we have never been able to achieve a growth rate of 4.5 per cent. As I am given to understand, the original estimate of the Planning Commission was that they would target 3.5 per cent. What is the additionality of factors? This is part (a) of my supplementary. What is the additionality of factors whereby the Planning Commission thinks that it will be successful in achieving the staggering improvement of full one per cent in growth terms? And part (b) is: I would like to find out from the Minister whether the Government is, at the same time, aware that, so far as food production which is a major component of agricultural production, is concerned, it is estimated that of the total 235 hectares of food-producing land which we cultivate, 166 million hectares is already degraded. So, in a situation where the irrigated land is getting degraded without much investment for production in rain-fed and dry lands, how is it that the Planning Commission estimates that we can reach 4.5 per cent during the Ninth Plan?

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: Sir, I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising this very important question. The first thing that I would draw his attention to is that the figures of growth of output are different from the growth of value-added figures. For example, in past Plans also, corresponding to, let us say, 3½ per cent growth of value added in agricultural production, the output targets have been higher, and this happens becuase, as the material intensity of production increases, the growth of output is higher than the growth of value added. I would submit for his consideration that he should not compare the figures of value-added growth which he has given in the question with the target of gross output in agriculture. This is a purely technical issue which needs clarification. Because of these reasons he has put a very big question and it requires a detailed answer. When one asks a question on the rate of growth of the agricultural sector which is one of the major sectors of the economy and which has a very large part of output, then obviously we have to give a detailed reply. He asked, "What was the additionality?" I would like to submit for his consideration that if he glances through the Approach Paper, he will see certain concrete aspects of the additionality that we are talking about. For example, we have taken a very serious note of the fact that the area under canal irrgation was not going up in the Eighth Five Year Plan. Therefore, last year we allocated Rs. 900 crores for specific projects in major and medium sectors and Rs. 100 crores for small projects. I would like to bring to the attention of the hon. Member the fact that when the Central Government allocates resources in this way for something as specific as water, it also means that the States also allocate correspondingly because we are only giving 50 per cent. There are indications— I don't have the final figures— the preliminary indications are that if you take the Centre and the States together, last year for agriculture and allied sectors, there was an additional allocation as compared to the past. I would like to say that this kind of issues are additionality questions, i.e. increasing emphasis which is being given for rural credit, rural infrastructure development fund or the methodology of planning which has been indicated. Now we have had a very detailed review. This is a very large country. There are areas within the country which have achieved a high rate of growth. The point that the hon. Member has raised was that there were other areas where there have been many problems. He has referred to rainfed areas. The recent review by the Planning Commission shows that even within the broad category of rain—fed areas in some Eastern and Southern States, in fact, the rate of growth in agriculture has been very good. Now it is that kind of performance which we want to trigger off in

other parts of the country. The Planning Commission in particular is working on a strategy of using additional areas under tubewell irrigation and channeling credit for those irrigated areas in the Eastern region. We hope to get this strategy in operation even during this agriculture season and accelerate it as we go along. So I would request the hon. Member to look at this question with the details that it deserves. I think the Approach Paper does indicate in sufficiently concrete terms the new sources of growth that we expect to catch. He has referred to the fact that somebody in the Planning Commission has told him that they have targeted a low rate of growth. I am very much surprised because the preliminary work that the Planning Commission is doing suggests that if you look at it from the demand side also corresponding to the kind of growth that is taking place this year in the economy which is expected to accelerate in the next round, then the demand for agricultural goods will also be higher. If you take into account the additional demand when the agricultural exports are also rising, the kind of growth that we are talking about is also required. So, the Planning Commission is looking at the problem both from the demand and the production potential point of view.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please try to make it brief. This is a vast subject.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Yes Sir, that is why I was referring to wishes being horses. We know about the growing demand. But the point is capability of the system to address those concerned. It is good that the Minister in the first part referred to two very critical areas, i.e. (a) irrigation and (b) rural credit. Sir, is the Minister aware that he has particularly referred to the M & M sector so far as irrigation is concerned? Till the beginning of the 1990s the figure available was that only 55 per cent of the total capacity which was built in the M & M sector was being utilised. As far as rural credit is concerned, the situation, I am afraid to say, has been one of major belts in the development of agriculture as also the allied sectors. What has been the rate of growth in terms of credit delivery, particularly to the vulnerable sections? What is the experience of the Eighth Plan? He should reply to this. In the (b) part of my question, I would like to refer to the excellent growth of agricultural production in the eastern region in general and in West Bengal in particular. Here our particular experience is, that land reforms have been carried out and the mobilisation of decentralised Panchayat system in agricultural activities has taken place also So what is the assessment of the Planning Commission? Has any study been done in linking land reforms to agricultural production in the country and what are the figures available for the different States?

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Sir, why don't the Minister and the hon. Member sit separately and discuss? It is an exhaustive one. The question is also long and the answer is also long.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is also very comprehensive. Anyway, land reforms must be answered because your answer does not contain a reference to land reforms.

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: As far as the question on irrigation is concerned, it is very well taken. I would like to submit for the consideration of the Member, if he looks at the Approach Paper, the project that we are funding in the advanced irrigation benefit programme, there the target is in terms of delivery of water to the field. I would submit this to the hon. Member. So the Planning Commission is now talking about a strategy where in the next year or two we cover the last mile. This is being monitered at the level of individual projects. If the Member wants, I can even give him the kind of areas—in fact, I can show them to him on a map—where the money that has been given will improve the canal system at the lowest level. We are not just putting in money in the dams, we are putting a lot of money for the improvement of the delivery system.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Are the projects complete?

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: These are the things we want to complete. We want to cover the last mile. It can be done no, it is not impossible Mr. Gurudas Das Gupta, I would like to submit, this, through you, to him. There is a whole National Water Management Project which was done in the Eighth Plan where in 40 projects it was shown, that, provided the money

is available and Indian irrigation engineers are given the option together with other people, they do deliver water to the fields. It has been done and it will be done. That is the point. These are concrete programmes that are there since last year and we are planning to accelerate them. As far as credit question is concerned, Sir, broadly the picture is that during the last two years credit to primary agricultural credit societies has improved because of restructuring that has been done in the cooperatives. There is an area of concern the land development banks which give money for capital formation in agriculture but even there, there are now packages and in fact, the agricultural capital formation figures are for the first time now showing a small increase. The question on land reforms is very important. The Planning Commission has extensively. In fact, the package that we have been talking about in the Eastern region does involve institutional reforms. It is necessary because credit and new technology cannot be accessed unless the rights on land of the tiller are recognised. We have had a major study done on this. A Revenue Ministers' Conference has been called and there is a whole set of concrete measures that have been suggested. This is also described in the Ninth Five Year Plan. So, the Planning Commission is very much aware of this kind of questions. We do plan to give them priority. I am sure we must have mentioned in the reply that institutional conditions are important. It is not as if we have ignored this class of questions.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am very suprised with the reply given by the hon. Minister. Mr. Minister, are you aware of a report given by the Standing Committee wherein they have said that the share of agriculture in the total GDP has come down from 56% in 1950-51 to 32% in 1992-93? This report further states that the population living in villages and dependent on agriculture has shown a marginal decline from 80% to 70% over the same period. This is the current position. Secondly, according to the same report, gross capital formation in agriculture in public sector which was 12.3% in 1960-61 has come down to 5.6% in 1991-92. This is a report of the Standing Committee. In this year's Budget allocation, you have provided Rs. 138 crores more. Only Rs. 138 crores. The total shortfall in the Central Plan was Rs. 10,000 crores to which Dr. Manmohan Singh took objection and we also took objection. In view of this, how do you intend to achive a growth rate of 4.5% in agriculture?

Your investment is going down. Your capital formation is going down. Priority sector lending has come down to 14% from 18%. Ask Mr. Som Pal.

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: The share of agricultural capital formation in total capital formation can fall, as it has always fallen historically. But the Planning Commission is concerned about another issue which I may mention if the hon. Member permits me. The Approach Paper to the Ninth Five Year Plan has taken this issue very seriously and highlighted it. The fact remains that the absolute volume of capital formation in the public sector has not increased in the Eight Five Year Plan at the pace that we wanted it to. The kind of strategies which I have talked about would lead to a reversal of that trend because we are making specific allocations to public projects relating to agriculture, either for irrigation or for infrastructure or for rural credit. Therefore, it would not be fair, I may submit, to the hon. Member to say like that. Agarwalji is a very senior person. My point is, please don't take only the Central figures in a year in which we have put in Rs. 900 crores or Rs. 1,300 crores additionally in the States' Plans so that they can match them.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: You have reduced the funds for irrigation. You have reduced the funds to Rs. 900 crores. Of the budgeted amount of Rs. 1,248 crores, you utilised only Rs. 815 crores. The shortfall is Rs. 433 crores. This time it is Rs. 1,025 crores than the budgeted amount. You have reduced the allocations for irrigation and flood control. These are not going to improve agriculture.

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Member is not listening to me. I will repeat what I have said.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: These are statistics.

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: I know, Sir. I am trying to explain to you those very statistics. Please listen to me. If you think I am

wrong, I will take back what I have said. It is not the point. An amount of Rs. 900 crores was given to the States and it is shown not in the Central Plan but in the States' Plans because we want the States to put in more money in irrigation projects so as to take care of these problems. Hon. Member Nilotpal Basu has gone into these problems. The point now is that this amount is not shown in the Central Plan. It is shown in the State's Plans. If you take the amounts provided in the Central and States' Plans, both for this year and last year, you will see that there is a very substantial increase in the agricultural outlays. That is because we are giving incentives to the States to invest more money in water. Last year it was Rs. 900 crores and this year it is Rs. 1,300 crores. They are matching it. These figures will directly go into agricultural capital formation. Hon. Member, please believe me, I am a former Chairman of the National Accounts Advisory Committee. The trend in capital formation that he talked about will be reversed with these numbers. So, the point is that these are the concrete ways in which we want to give priority to the agricultural sector and, as I said, we are planning and I hope we will be able to implement it and there is another major programme where we give a thrust to tubewell irrigation and to spreading agricultural technology in the Eastern region in those areas where these things have not taken place. So, the emphasis on agriculture is a real emphasis. It is not just the emphasis on numbers.

SHRI SOM PAL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister for Planning and Programme Implementation has just now spoken about the methodology of planning. I am not going to ask a question about the agriculture as a whole. I am going to raise a very pertinent query about the methodology of planning itself.

According to my information, and this has been accepted in the Approach Paper to the 9th Plan which document I am holding in my hand, as well as the Economic Survey for the year 1996-97, funds allocated in the last several Five Year Plans as percentage of total Plan resources allocated to all sectors as well as in real terms have been going down. Is it correct?

The second part of my query is this. I would like to know whether capital formation as a rate has been declining, whether as a share in total capital formation it has been declining and, if so, what the reasons thereof have been. The argument that has been given by the hon. Minister that this is a secular phenomenon witnessed in all the developing economies is correct, but then a commensurate shift of the population also takes place in these countries. Here it was 80% in 1960 or I think in 1950 and even now 64% people are getting direct employment from agriculture and 29.4 per cent is the contribution made by agriculture.

Another question which is very relevant from the methodology point of view is that the incremental capital output ratio obtaining in agriculture is much favourable than it is in industry. It is 3:1 in agriculture while in industry it is 4.5:1 or 5:1. If it is so, then what are the reasons for these declines and what are the specific corrective steps in terms of concomitant allocation being taken by the hon. Minister as Minister for planning and Programme Implementation? These are my queries, Sir. Thank you.

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: I would like to clarify again lest I should create any misunderstanding on this. The Planning Commission is very seriously concerned about the slow growth and in some years the decline in capital formation in the agricultural sector in real terms, that is, in constant prices. It is particularly concerned about the slow growth of public capital formation in the agricultural sector in the late '80s and rearly '90s. The share-question is another question. If the non-agricultural sector is growing at 7% and the agricultural sector is growing, even if it grows well, at three to four per cent, then shares fall. That is because of the Engle's Law. So, the share-question is a different one. But I would say, for example, to clarify and support what the hon. Member, Shri Som Pal, has said, if we are to achieve a growth rate of around 4.5% in output, then given the incremental capital-output ratio, that he said is around three, we will need an agricultural capital formation rate of around 14%.

SHRI SOM PAL: But is it correct that it is 3:1 in agriculture?

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: It is around that figure.

SHRI SOM PAL gher, but that is true all over the world.

SHRI SOM PAL: That is my point. So, as a planner the priority should be that more capital should go where it will yield better fruits than in industry.

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: As a planner the investment requirements of the agricultural sector should be met. Now, the point is that it is the kind of public investment strategy that I am talking about, encouraging the States to put in more money in irrigation, to put in more money on on-farm construction, lower level canal systems or the reform of the ...

SHRI SOM PAL: But the painful fact is that the decline has been more profound in the public sector investment. What is the correct thing? Accepting the problem is not the solution. What is the concrete solution which we are envisaging in the Ninth Plan in terms of the gap which has already occurred and the adverse terms of trade which agriculture has been facing? This is a very wide question. So, what is the compensatory investment plan that we are envisaging?

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: I would again clarify for the hon. Member's consideration that if the Planning Commission targets investment in specific aspects of capital formation relating to agriculture, public capital formation in agriculture is largely a question of investment in water projects because irrigation is the central question there. Now, we are trying to reverse it in a concrete manner. We put in Rs. 900 crores last year, we are putting Rs. 1,300 crores this year. We have set up a high level commission which is going into the details. What I am submitting is that we have already reversed that trend. As soon as the numbers come out, you will see that with this kind of numbers it has to be that capital formation in agricultural sector, public capital formation will go up.

Similarly, the whole emphasis on rural credit on infrastructure is meant to energise private investment at a faster pace. These are the kind of strategies we want to follow through. I talked about the eastern region or other regions, I don't have the time to go into those details, but I would submit that the Ninth Plan's Approach Paper does have very concrete set of ideas on reversing these trends. I would request the hon. Members to go through them and if there are further suggestions, by all means -- hon. Members like Shri Som Pal and others are distinguished Members -- we will be very happy to look at them if there are other things to consider in the final version of the Ninth Plan.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the statement made by the hon. Minister of Agriculture whereby he has publicly stated that the allocations for agriculture and allied sectors in the current year's Plan are thoroughly inconsistent with the 4.5 per cent target which has been laid down. The second thing that I do want to point out is that the Approach Paper earlier had a figure of 3.5. per cent as agricultural growth for the 9th Plan but when it was circulated to the National Development Council, the Draft that I saw had merely a slip, and 3.5 per cent was changed to 4.5 per cent. Does that imply that the Planning Commission has done a serious exercise as to work out the resource implications of raising the rate of growth of agriculture? If that is the case, we would like to be assured on that point.

SHRI YOGENDER K. ALAGH: Sir, as far as the Annual Plan is concerned, as I have been saying, I also share the concern of the hon. Minister of Agriculture that some aspects of public investment strategies for agriculture in the eastern region, particularly for tubewell irrigation and related issues relating to technology difusion, are things where we need to take full account of the kind of potential there is, and if necessary, allocate sufficient funds for them. There may be the whole question of directing more funds from credit institutions or they may need some matching assistance from the public sector where again the States can provide or, if necessary, the Centre can look into it. I would submit to the hon. Member's consideration—he is an experienced person—

that the Planning Commission is seized of the matter and if there are any problems, we will come up with the required solution before this cropping season.

I am not sure where this business is coming in of the Planning Commission changing its targets. It is true that in the Approach Paper there are two growth configurations given. One is of a lower order of rate of growth which is a kind of trend projection and the other is the projection which the National Development Council agreed to it, is a 7 per cent growth rate. The Planning Commission has given the 7 per cent growth exercise a fairly detailed consideration of the kind that has been talked about.

In fact, in the Approach Paper the maximum number of pages are on these details — regional strategies; a need for sectoral water plan; a need for sectoral agricultural plan. As I submitted earlier, given the kind of demand configurations which follow from a seven per cent rate of growth, the kind of growth that we are talking about, is required. From the production side, it is possible. Maybe, there was a reference to growth value-added, which would be lower perhaps than the growth of gross output. So, on this question since I do not really have a concrete guideline, I am sorry to say that I cannot say anything beyond this.

Private Steel Plants in the Country

*502. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: †
SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the condition of private steel plants in our country by and large;

(b) the companies making profits and those incurring losses; and

(c) the measures being taken by Government to protect the loss-making companies?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (c) Whereas in the liberalised economic regime the financial performance of private sector steel units is not centrally regulated, available information for 1994-95 and 1995-96 for major steel producing units in the private sector shows that the financial performance has been good. As for 1996-97, financial performance would be known after the accounts are finalised.

Private sector steel plants are subject to the vigorous interplay of the market forces. Companies making losses have to respond to the situation in the manner they think best and are free to approach banks and financial institutions for necessary assistance. For sick companies, Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction provides an institutional mechanism for addressing their problems.

श्री संजय निरूपम: सर, मंत्री महोदय से जो मेरा सवाल था वह सवाल का सार मोटा-मोटी तौर पर यह था कि प्राइवेट स्टील फैक्टरीज की परफॉर्मेंस पिछले दो-चार सालों के अन्दर क्या रही है। इन्होंने जो जवाब दिया है उससे ऐसा लगता है कि किसी ले-मैन ने जवाब दिया है। मैं तो एक ले-मैन हूं और मुझे ज्यादा समझ नहीं है, लेकिन मंत्री महोदय से मैं उम्मीद करता हूं कि उनको तो इसमें विशेष जानकारी होनी चाहिए थी। इसमें विशेष जानकारी किसी भी तरह की नहीं है। 1994-95 और 1995-96 के बारे में जो प्राइवेट स्टील सैक्टर की परफार्मेंस के बारे में बताया है उन्होंने कहा है कि जनरली गुड रहा है, अच्छा रहा है। उसके बाद 1996-97 के बारे में उन के पास कोई जानकारी नहीं है। मेरा जो सवाल पूछने के पीछे एक जो उद्देश्य था, जो मकसद था, जो निहित स्वार्थ है, वह यह है कि इंपोर्ट ड्यूटी घटने के बाद और कोयले की प्राइस बढ़ने के बाद पब्लिक सैक्टर में स्टील की प्राइस हमारे यहां लगातार बढ़ रही है और जो बाहर से स्टील आ रहा है वह स्टील बहुत सस्ता होता जा रहा है, हालात क्या है आप भी जानते होंगे मंत्री महोदय कि सेल के पास जरूरत से ज्यादा स्टील पड़ा हुआ है और वह बेच नहीं पा रहा है क्योंकि हमारी स्टील अब इंटरनेशनल स्टील के मुकाबले प्राइस के मामले में कंपीट नहीं कर पा रही है, तो मैं यही जानना चाह रहा हूं कि प्राइवेट स्टील प्लांट्स में जो स्टील प्रोड्यूस हो रही है, जो मैनुफैक्चर हो रही है, उन स्टीलों की क्या दशा है? क्या वह हमारे यहां मार्केट में प्रोपर तरीके से इंपोर्टेड स्टील से कंपीट कर पा रही हैं और उनके एक्सपोर्ट के क्या चांसेज हैं, मेरा पूछने का मकसद यह है?

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, after the economic reforms in our country,

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Sanjay Nirupam.